Guilt

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Guilt

by sourweather

Summary

After the news about Dolarhyde breaks, both Will and his brother Adam work through their own guilt.

Notes

look I'm working on a fluff fic rn so I HAVE to do angst for my warmup lmao. also this one took longer than 30 minutes because I was. excited djznznznz

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

Nigel came home that night to find Adam crying. The lights were all out, muscle memory and the moon through the window were the only things guiding Nigel's way. Adam was curled up on the couch, bundled under a thin blanket. He wasn't sobbing, wasn't gasping for air. The tears just rolled in tiny tracks along his face, and it might not have been a meltdown but Nigel knew that something was seriously fucking wrong because Adam hated the tacky feeling of drying tears on his skin but he didn't move to wipe them away.

He didn't even look up when Nigel approached the couch. His eyes were glazed, distant, swollen.

"Baby?" He tried to keep his voice soft and gentle, but Nigel was terrified. "Adam, baby what's wrong?"

Adam bit his lip, still silent. Nigel moved to sit beside him, burrowing his way under the blanket and weaving his arms tight around Adam's waist. Wasn't enough to make him smile, but Nigel took a cue by the way that Adam sighed in what sounded like relief. He leaned close, pressed a kiss to Adam's damp cheek. It was warm, salty.

"Talk to me, angel."

He swallowed thickly before speaking. His voice was rough and unsteady. "Have I ever told you that I have an older brother?"

Nigel frowned. "No, I guess not."

Adam nodded. "We have different mothers," he continued. "When my mom left our father, she took me to live with her, and Will stayed with our dad."

He sniffed sharply, finally breaking from his stupor enough to scrub the tears from his skin. "We were very close, when we were little. He took good care of me whenever my parents were working or busy. When Dad would get angry at me, Will would always stick up for me. I think… I think he liked having someone to be strong for, maybe. Somebody to look after."

"I'm sure he misses you," Nigel ventured, reaching up to brush a wayward curl behind Adam's ear.

More tears. Adam's voice began to tremble. "I would visit, sometimes. When Will and Dad were staying somewhere close by. I'm not good at reading people, but I could tell – " His breathing hitched, he let out a wet hiccup. "I could tell that he wasn't okay, Nigel. Me and Mom leaving, it changed both of them. Dad was angrier, and he was drinking more, and Will… h-he was *different.* I can't – I can't explain it, but I knew. I knew."

"Parents are shitty," Nigel sighs. His hands have taken to soothing Adam of their own accord, rubbing at his arms reassuringly. "You were a kid. It's just how it goes."

“He’s a murderer.”

Nigel froze. Adam’s features crumbled as soon as the words left his mouth, finally breaking into high, weak sobs. He pulled away and Nigel had to stop himself from dragging him back into his arms.

“It’s all over the news,” he croaked, quickly spiraling into hysterics. “H-He broke a serial killer out of prison, and they murdered a man together − they’re saying Will *ate* people, Nigel!”

“Fuck,” Nigel breathed. He was floundering, searching for words that weren’t fucking coming. What is someone meant to say in this situation?! *Is* there anything to say?! “Fuck, just breathe, baby, try to breathe − ”

“This is all my fault.”

Nigel felt his blood turn cold. Adam gathered himself into a tighter ball than before, his body wound tight enough to snap.

“He was my brother, and I knew that something was wrong, and I didn’t do anything. M-Maybe if I’d been around more, or told Mom to try to take him too, or − ” He sobbed again, clamping his hand tight against his mouth as his shoulders shook. “It’s all my fault.”

Oh, no. Fuck no, absolutely fucking not. “You listen to me, Adam.” He took his angel by the shoulders, forced him to look back at him. “None of this shit is your fault, okay? You were a little fucking kid, it wasn’t your responsibility to keep him from going crazy. You got that?”

Adam stared up at him, his eyes wide and wet and glistening. “Okay,” he whispered.

“I wanna hear you say it, baby. Your brother’s fucked in the head, but that’s not your fucking fault.”

He sniffled, tried to gather himself. “It’s not… not my f-fault.”

“That’s right.” Nigel pulled him into a tight, nearly crushing hug. Like he could squeeze all of the hurt and heartache out of him if he tried hard enough. “And I’m gonna keep telling you until you believe it. You are a brilliant, wonderful person, Adam Raki. You’ve got a good heart. You wouldn’t feel so broken up about this if you didn’t.”

Adam nodded where his face was pressed against Nigel’s shoulder, his curls soft beneath Nigel’s jaw.

“I love you, starlight.”

He’d finally stopped shaking, his body turning heavy with exhaustion in Nigel’s arms. Nigel kept holding him, petting down his spine in the dark of their living room, watching the moon out their window.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

aaaa okay I HAD to make a part two from wills side <3

“A penny for your thoughts.”

It pulls the barest inclination of a smile to his lips. He’s been out on the front porch for nearly half an hour, now. There’s a mug of tea in his hands, one that has gone cold and unsipped. His gaze doesn’t stray from the view. The golden sun, the fruit trees, the sparkling line of the ocean in the distance.

“We don’t have to talk,” Hannibal adds after another moment of silence, but in reality the words are said in the hopes of making him talk.

Will obliges. “Do you ever worry that you might be a hypocrite?” he asks.

“What do you mean?”

He sets the mug aside, leaning back and bracing his weight on the heels of his palms. “You kill people.”

“I do.”

“You don’t feel guilty about it.”

“I see no reason to.”

Will nods to himself. “But you feel guilty about things that happened between us, in the past.”

Hannibal shrugs, as if it’s of no import. “I love you,” he replies. It doesn’t even need saying, in his opinion. All of this is self-evident. “That makes you exceptional.”

He looks up at Hannibal, his expression is unamused but his eyes are anything but. Hannibal takes a seat beside him, feet hanging over the edge of the porch. It’s nearly sunset, and their property has been bathed in a warm glow.

“What guilt are you harboring, Will?” he asks. A part of him grows tense as he asks, jealous over the idea that Will might regret hurting Jack, or Alana or − God forbid − Molly.

The relief when Will sighs and says “I’ve been thinking a lot about my brother, lately,” is so great that for a moment he doesn’t think to question the statement. Then, a beat later, his

curiosity catches up with the conversation.

“You have a brother?”

Will nods, his smile growing slightly in his nostalgia. “I haven’t seen him since I moved out of my dad’s house,” he explains. “He’s never been good at reaching out, and I… well, I figured he was better off without me. Guess I turned out to be right.”

It’s a great deal to take in stride, but Hannibal tries. “You’ve never mentioned him before.”

“I don’t like to talk about him, much. Kind of a sore spot.” Will looks to the side, catches Hannibal’s eye, holds it. “I’m sure you know the feeling.”

It strikes him right where he’s most vulnerable. Wordlessly, and with a heavy heart, he nods.

Will tries to shake away some of the solemness between them, but it clings. “I don’t know, I guess I’ve always had that instinct in me. I like to take care of things. I was five when he was born, and he was so *small,* and – ” He gestures, some abstract thing that represents nothing. “I think about him. Sometimes. How he’s doing, if he’s okay.”

“Our families are the first creatures we form bonds with. They possess intimate knowledge about us, for better or worse. Memories of us at our most innocent, our most naive.”

“Adam may have been the last person on Earth who saw me as innocent,” Will sighs, scrubbing at his face. “I was always good to him, or as good as I could bring myself to be. I did everything I could to keep him from having to see how shitty things really were for us. For me.” He deflates, then, his shoulders sagging under an unseen weight. “I feel like I’m taking something from him, by being… this.”

Hannibal nods, taking a moment to absorb the other man’s words. Sitting with his thoughts, just as Will had been before. “How can you feel remorse for taking Adam’s childhood from him, when you feel no remorse for taking lives,” Hannibal follows.

“Exactly.” Will’s palm lands on his own right thigh with a light slap. “I killed Dolarhyde, and it was *incredible.* I’ve never felt more right about anything in my life.”

At the words, Hannibal’s chest swells with pride. How far he’s come, from shamefully admitting to enjoying the murder of Garrett Jacob Hobbs some six years ago.

“But when I think about Adam, hearing about what I’ve done? About what I am now?” He shakes his head, grimacing. “It’s hard. And it feels wrong that it’s hard.”

“I don’t think it’s wrong.”

Will gnaws on his lower lip for a moment, weighing his words before measuring them out. “Do you ever worry about that? How Mischa would look at you, if she saw you now?”

The sun has begun to dip beneath the horizon. It never gets cold here, not really. Hannibal feels a chill regardless.

“...I try not to think about it,” he replies after a fashion. “A sore spot.”

“Maybe it is hypocritical, and it just doesn’t make any difference. Maybe I only care about hurting people when I love them.” Will tips his body to the side, then, resting his head on Hannibal’s shoulder. “Maybe he’s exceptional.”

“Perhaps it runs in the family,” Hannibal returns, and Will chuckles softly.

Nothing more is said for long minutes afterward. The first stars of twilight make their appearance, and Will’s gaze seems to train more heavily on them than usual.

When at last the silence is broken, it is Hannibal who breaks it. “...I could find a way to contact him, if you wanted,” he offers. “You could send your regards, or an apology, if it would ease your mind. Or perhaps a sum of money could suddenly appear in Adam’s possession, in perpetuity. A way of looking after him from a distance, making sure he’s cared for. Whatever you need.”

Will shakes his head, slowly. “No. No, as much as it hurts me, I think the best thing I can do for him is just… this. Let him live. Maybe sometimes the best way to tell someone that you love them is to walk away and not come back.”

Hannibal’s instinct is to protest. To reunite Will with Adam, at all costs. He isn’t certain it that would truly be for either brother’s benefit at all, though. It’s something he wants selfishly, he realizes. Something he can’t have. Something that facilitating this reconciliation wouldn’t really give him.

“If that’s what you think is best.”

Suddenly, Will makes his way to his feet. He reaches out, takes Hannibal by the hand, tugs him upward. “Come on” he says, nodding in the direction of their front door. “Let’s go inside, we need to start on dinner before it turns into a midnight snack.”

He leads Hannibal inside, letting the door swing shut in their wake.

End Notes

thanks so much as always to arrnutsss and all of my raindrops for the support!!! <3

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